



SALEM POLICE DEPARTMENT NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release – August 3, 2009

SALEM POLICE CHIEF JAMES R. BRYANT ANNOUNCES HIS RETIREMENT

It is the end of an era for Salem and in particular, the City's Police Department.

After 43 years of distinguished public service, Salem Police Chief James R. Bryant announced this morning that he is retiring, effective November 1, 2009.

"I've had a great career and I've really enjoyed coming to work each and every day, but police work is a young man's job, and it's just time," says Bryant.

Bryant, who is now 64-years-old, was appointed Salem's Police Chief in 1995 almost 30 years after he came to work for the department. Back in 1966, Bryant was fresh out of the Marine Corps, all of 21-years-old and in search of a job. Upon returning to the Roanoke Valley he found several opportunities for employment, but chose the Salem Police Department for its job security.

"When I first came to the police force the cars didn't even have air conditioning, now they're equipped with laptops, in-car-cameras and radar machines, so I've seen it all in 43 years," he says.

When Bryant began his career as a patrol officer in 1966 the department was comprised of 16 officers. Today, it's made up of 66 men and women, who will no doubt miss his presence and leadership.

"The retirement of Chief Bryant will be a loss for both the city and me personally," says Salem City Manager Kevin Boggess. "His wisdom and 43 years of Salem experience cannot be replaced. He has truly been one of the great leaders in this city's history, and I feel fortunate to have been able to work with him."

Bryant holds a unique distinction among many of his contemporaries in other law enforcement agencies in that he is the only City employee to start as a patrolman and rise to the level of Chief of Police, while simultaneously rising through the enlisted and non-commissioned officer ranks from Private to Sergeant Major in the Marine Corps.

Both are inspirational stories and real life examples that living the American Dream is possible. Bryant grew up in the Cloverdale section of Botetourt County, never graduated from high school, but eventually earned both an Associate's degree from Virginia Western and a Bachelor's of Science degree from Bluefield College in Managing Human Resources.

“Being a young man and coming to the police department with a GED and knowing that I’m leaving here with a bachelor’s degree and 43 years of memories and accomplishments is very satisfying to me, and in some ways amazing,” he says.

Chief Bryant enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and was on active duty from 1962 through 1966. He later resumed his military service with the USMC Reserve and was called to active duty during Operation Desert Shield- Desert Storm in 1990. He participated in all phases of the campaign to liberate Kuwait and received personal commendations and decorations including the Combat Action Ribbon and Navy Commendation Medal. He retired from active service status on July 1, 1995.

“Respect has to be earned, because it’s not something you can demand, and if there are others in this department or other law enforcement officials who respect me for what I’ve done, I appreciate that and certainly try to honor that respect,” he says.

Bryant, who also is a graduate of the prestigious F.B.I. Law Enforcement Academy in Quantico, picked up some of that respect recently when he was named the state of Virginia’s D.A.R.E. Administrator of The Year for 2008. In 1991, he became the first director of Salem Camp D.A.R.E. – an eight week-long program that is in the process of wrapping up its 19th summer of educating the city’s young people with a successful combination of fun in the sun and life lessons.

“We are very proud of the Salem Police Department and Chief Bryant’s programs like D.A.R.E. Camp and the Citizen’s Police Academy,” says Boggess. “These programs have fostered a great trust that exists between the Department and Salem’s citizens.”

“In a occupation like this you can get caught up playing favorites, but I always tried to treat people fairly and the way that I would like to be treated,” says Bryant. “If people just remember me as being a fair man, then I’ve accomplished everything I set out to do.”

Bryant, who is an avid outdoorsman, plans to spend more time hunting and riding his ATV when he and his wife of 42-years, Lois Ann, aren’t traveling.

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